

Executive Summary: 2003-2005 Homeless Families Plan

Plan Mission:

Prevent and reduce homelessness of families with children by effectively coordinating and using available resources.

Plan Goals:

-Shelter homeless families.

-Return homeless families to stable housing.

-Enhance access to needed DSHS services by homeless families.

-Assist families likely to become homeless with maintaining stable housing.

- Improve DSHS staff understanding of homelessness and knowledge of resources

Washington: A Leader in Addressing Homelessness

As a result of the 1999 Homeless Families Plan, Washington State has become a recognized leader in effectively addressing the needs of homeless families.

A comprehensive system of community-based homelessness prevention, emergency shelter, transitional housing, and mainstream Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) programs provide Washington's families with a safety net of last resort when issues such as job loss, low incomes and domestic violence result in homelessness.

Plan Investments Yield Results

In SFY 2001, the \$12.7 million provided by the Homeless Families Plan supported:

- 607,608 bednights of emergency shelter (a "bednight" is one person provided one night of shelter)
- 632,238 bednights of homelessness prevention
- transitional housing for 1,889 children in 858 families
- 24,084 instances of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) Additional Requirements - (AREN) to families for one-time financial assistance to prevent or quickly resolve homelessness
- the building or preservation of 42 units and 32 beds of transitional housing

Plan Fosters Effective Integration of Services

Beyond the funding of much-needed programs to help families, the Plan has fostered an unprecedented integration of housing and social services. The Plan has brought together these historically separate silos of policy and funding.

Washington State Selected to Serve As National Model of Integration

The Plan was instrumental in Washington State being chosen to participate in the Homeless Families Policy Academy, through which the federal government hopes to gain insight in how to integrate housing and "mainstream" services (i.e., TANF, Medicare) with housing programs.

Building on the Plan's foundation, the Policy Academy team of representatives from community service providers; DSHS; CTED; and the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless has continued the work of improving homeless services through better integration and measurement of outcomes.

Washington State's efforts to link mainstream and housing resources are essential as the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) moves to discontinue the funding of services for homeless persons.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2001 – 2003

DSHS Report on Homeless Families

The comprehensive 2001 DSHS study of homeless families has provided policy makers with critical information needed to effectively address homelessness.

Higher rates of homelessness exist in rural areas.

This information has contributed to the planning efforts of state agencies and homeless advocates who have been working together to improve the delivery of services to homeless parents and their children.

Key findings include:

- 750 families are sheltered in emergency housing each night
- Higher rates of homelessness exist in rural areas relative to population
- Families were homeless for 1/3 of the year, on average
- Homeless parents do not disproportionately abuse alcohol and other drugs

No Wrong Door

DSHS instituted the No Wrong Door model as an integrated multi-disciplinary approach to providing human services to individuals and families. Two pilot Community Services Office (CSO) sites focus on homeless issues and homeless families with children.

No Wrong Door sites have instituted team-based case management with multiple services providers from within DSHS and outside agencies. This model shows great promise for better delivery of services to clients with multiple needs – including homeless families.

**Barriers Removed
for Working
Connections Child
Care**

An improved application process has made it easier for homeless families to access DSHS's main subsidy childcare program, Working Connections Child Care (WCCC).

Access to the WCCC program was improved by providing:

- A toll-free statewide phone system that families can call to connect with their local office and determine their eligibility over the phone; and
- A website explaining benefits eligibility.

Changes to the eligibility criteria for the Homeless Child Care Program during SFY 2002 also increased the availability of these crisis-centered, short-term childcare services.

**Safe Babies, Safe
Moms Substance
Abuse Treatment**

The Safe Babies, Safe Moms program continues to provide critical transitional housing and services for families, many of whom have been homeless. Currently, this program serves approximately 275 substance-abusing pregnant, post-partum, and parenting women and their children (0-3) at project sites in three counties. The DSHS project works to stabilize women and their young children through a targeted intensive case management approach. The project helps families to transition from public assistance to self-sufficiency.

**Statewide
Continuum of Care
Planning**

*In 2001, HUD
awarded the
Continuum \$1.9
million to help fund
11 homeless projects
in rural Washington.*

CTED continues to lead a strong consortium of counties in implementing a Rural Continuum of Care, which is a comprehensive system of homeless services where there are fewer resources and limited capacity to support an adequate base of housing and services.

In 2001, HUD awarded the Continuum \$1.9 million to help fund 11 homeless projects in rural Washington.

More recently, CTED, the Rural Steering Committee and the Washington State Coalition for the Homeless initiated a joint effort to improve the local cooperation of the mental health provider community (including the Regional Support Networks) and local homeless housing and service providers. Forums and workshops helped to jumpstart planning efforts in two communities to develop new permanent supportive housing for their area.

**Sound Families
Partnership**

In July 2000, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation committed \$40 million to establish Sound Families for the benefit of homeless families in the Puget Sound region.

CTED, along with local government and nonprofit organizations have worked with the Gates Foundation in evaluating and helping to bring about viable projects to fulfill the goal of building nearly 1,500 transitional housing units over the next three years. The Secretary of DSHS serves on the Sound Families Steering Committee. Almost 300 housing units have been funded to date.

Dedicated Funding for Housing

In 2002, the Legislature passed and Governor Locke signed into law House Bill 2060, which adds a ten-dollar surcharge on each document recorded by county auditors, to fund local and state low-income housing needs. This provides a critical new source of funding for affordable housing across the state.

Sixty percent of the funds are directed to local governments to fund low-income housing.

The remaining funds are deposited into the Housing Trust Fund (HTF) administered by CTED for operating and maintaining low-income housing and emergency shelters.

HIGHLIGHTS OF NEXT STEPS: 2003-2005

A woman with two small children living in her car was provided emergency and transitional housing by Housing Hope in Everett, using Homeless Families Plan funding. Six months of shelter helped the woman earn a nursing assistant degree, which led to a job as a nurse practitioner. She is now living in her own apartment, and is building her own home through a self-help home ownership program.

"Before I came and got help, I didn't know

The upcoming biennium presents an opportunity for Washington State to build on the successes of earlier plans by further improving service integration and performance measurement. The funding, first provided under the 1999 Plan, will continue to play a key role in addressing the needs of homeless families with children.

Momentum resulting from the 2003-2005 Plan and the Policy Academy initiatives will help address the challenges presented by dwindling state and federal resources.

In the 2003-2005 biennium CTED, DSHS, and community partners will:

Develop the Next Stage of the Homeless Families Plan Using the Policy Academy Process
The Policy Academy Team, representing community and state stakeholders, will work to develop the next stage of the Homeless Families Plan, by adapting and expanding the following Academy priorities:

- Elevate homelessness
- Tie case management to housing
- Examine existing practices for opportunities to

**The Washington State Homeless Families Plan
2003-2005 Biennium**

where to turn. I felt like I was going to have a nervous breakdown. With the rent assistance that the program provided me, I have been able to get my life back on track. It feels wonderful to be able to provide for my daughter on my own."

- Seattle El Centro de la Raza Program Participant

- strengthen linkages to mainstream services
- Improve linkages between mental health and chemical dependency systems
- Build local capacity

Pilot Integration of DSHS and Community-Based Services

DSHS will continue to pilot two approaches to service integration in Bellingham and Everett, involving Community Service Office staff working side-by-side with community service providers to assist homeless families. If successful, the models may be deployed statewide.

Bring DSHS and Community-Based Staff Together

DSHS CSO staff and community-based homeless service providers will participate in cross-agency training on how best to serve homeless families. The training will be an opportunity for community providers and DSHS staff to identify how they can link mainstream and housing resources to serve homeless families.

Begin Deploying the Homeless Management Information System

CTED will deploy the first pieces of the Homeless Management Information System, which will provide policy makers additional insight on how best to use the resources tied to the Homeless Families Plan.

Improve Data Collected by Program Serving the Homeless
DSHS, CTED, and community-based program representatives will meet regularly to refine and monitor the data collected about homeless persons. Although most social service programs serve some homeless families, many do not have a reliable way of measuring the service they are providing homeless families. This effort will build on the successful effort to standardize the data collected by Homeless Management Information Systems now being deployed.

